

Grain overload can be prevented by gradually introducing animals to grain or pellets. The amount of grain and the time taken to adapt sheep or cattle to grain depends on:

- availability of hay and other feed
- time of year
- type of grain being fed
- aims of feeding (such as for weaners for sale or for lactating ewes).

Specific antibiotic products that selectively reduce the numbers of acid-producing bacteria in the gut are available on prescription from veterinarians. These make it safe to introduce grain more rapidly without a long conditioning process.

Some useful guidelines for preventing grain overload in stock are:

- Use oats and lupins in preference to, or before transitioning to, wheat or barley.
- During the introduction phase, feed grain daily.
- Introduce oats to sheep by starting with 50 grams on the first day, followed by increases of 50g per head per day until the required ration is reached.
- Ensure sheep always have access to roughage as well as fed grain.
- Introduce oats to cattle by starting with 500g per head per day, followed by increases of 500g per head every fourth day until the required ration is reached.
- When feeding grain to cattle for production ensure a good quality source of hay or silage is always available and that it makes up at least 20% of the ration (unless feeding a complete ration where the roughage and grain are mixed).
- To transition to wheat or barley from oats, increase the wheat or barley portion by 25% of the oat ration every five days over 16 days. For example, if the current oat ration is 500g, start by adding 125g of wheat or barley to every 375g of oats.
- Monitor your herd or flock for signs of scouring, depression, lethargy and lameness, which will indicate that the amount of grain being fed is being increased too fast.
- Check pulpy kidney vaccinations are up to date and vaccinate if necessary before grain feeding.